UNITED NATIONS

World Chronicle

PROGRAMME: No. 598, recorded 14 September 1995

GUEST: **Robert MULLER**
Chancellor
University for Peace

JOURNALISTS: Thalif Deen, Inter Press Service
Ted Morello, Far Eastern Economic Review

MODERATOR: Michael Littlejohns

THE UNIVERSITY FOR PEACE

Robert MULLER, Chancellor of the University for Peace, elaborates on the role the University plays in promoting peace and security through research, study and education. Collective regional and international efforts are indispensable to maintain peace and harmony among the nations and peoples of the world. Spirituality is an important factor in avoiding wars and conflicts. Mr. Muller believes that humanity is not prepared for the new century, and it is a mistake for countries to devote more resources to military activities than to peace.

WORLD CHRONICLE is produced by the Media Division, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Duration:	27:59"
Executive Producer:	Kamil Taha
Director:	Livingston Hinckley
Production Assistant:	Ellen McGuffie

ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

As we approach the end of the century, peace is still as elusive as ever. Armed conflicts in many parts of the world cause untold destruction and human suffering. Many of these disputes might have been averted had serious collective effort been exerted to maintain peace. How can the international community realize this dream which is common to all humankind?

Our guest today is a veteran United Nations official and heads a major research institution concerned with the issues of international peace and security. He is Robert Muller, Chancellor of the University for Peace, which is located in Costa Rica. Joining me to talk with Mr. Muller are Thalif Deen of Inter Press Service and Ted Morello of the Far Eastern Economic Review.

Mr. Muller, welcome to World Chronicle. Mr. Muller, you've been associated with the United Nations throughout its 50-year existence. In that period there have been more than 150 wars, and as we know only too well, some of them are continuing today. It must be very discouraging for a man of peace like yourself that the best efforts of the United Nations in which you've had a part have been so unsuccessful. Now, the University for Peace is apparently trying to inculcate feelings for peace among scholars. How are you actually doing it? And do you feel that you're being successful?

MULLER: Well, in the first place, I think when you deal with such a big problem as world peace you have to be like a doctor, you must never be really discouraged. When I was a young man entering the UN in '48, I was almost sure that within 20 years we'd have another world war. Because if France and Germany could not get along, and my grandparents had five successive nationalities in three wars, how could I imagine that communists, capitalists, East and West could live without war? Maybe it was the atomic bomb, but today I'm absolutely surprised that we haven't had a world war. We have many local conflicts, and out of the 72 conflicts we have today only 3 are international. So now we have internal conflicts in which the United Nations has little to do.

The University for Peace was created at the request of Costa Rica, a demilitarized country, so it's an ideal place for it. And when I joined it after my UN career, I was surprised that we had neither a science for peace nor a strategy for peace nor a methodology for peace. So we now have to do what the military academies are doing, we must have a science, a strategy and a methodology. So this is what we are doing. And we think that we must deal with every conflict problem on earth. We have now succeeded at least in having conflict resolution as a major subject in most of the universities around the world. A few years ago

there was not a single conflict resolution course; today we have about 700 to 800 conflict resolution courses.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Muller, I don't want to seem cynical, but the human animal seems to have a natural capacity for war rather than for peace. How can you teach peace in your university in Costa Rica?

MULLER: The same way a parent has to teach peace to the children. The human family is one big family, and we must teach peace, even if it does not always work. You'll always have exceptions. But I think that if you are a human being you have to be on the good side, on the optimistic side, and do always.... If I had a doctor who looked at me and said, "Well, my god, they are all going to die anyway, so why shouldn't he die?" -- I wouldn't like to have such a doctor.

LITTLEJOHNS: How many students do you have? And do they end up as sort of missionaries for peace, in a sense?

MULLER: No. What we do is we make sure that they all get internships in the United Nations, in the Organization of American States, and in places where they become the future ambassadors. And, as an old-timer from the UN, I work there for $1 a year, because I want to give my experience from the UN to these young people, so that they do not lose the time it took me in 40 years to learn what I have learned. And there are several elderly people like myself who do the same. Whether we are going to win or not to me is irrelevant. It is my duty to be on the side of peace, because what I have seen in the Second World War -- I was in prison, I saw tortures -- I do not want to see this happen to my children and grandchildren. So I do a hundred per cent, everything I can, day and night for peace, even if I do not succeed.

DEEN: But Dr. Muller, when you talk about peace, there's a theory that if you go into the roots of the conflicts that are taking place today -- some of the ethnic conflicts taking place in Africa, Asia -- they say the root cause is economic problems, and if you resolve some of these economic problems, most of these ethnic problems would be sorted out. Do you subscribe to this theory?

MULLER: Well, there are many causes. You also have purely fundamentalist, religious causes. Most of the conflicts we have today are of a religious origin or an ethnic origin. What I propose, as a matter of fact, is that we should have a world conference on violence in order to prepare for a third millennium which would be non-violent. You have violence in the family, you have violence in the streets, you have ethnic violence, you have religious violence, and so far in the United Nations we have been dealing only with international violence. It is only now that for the first time the UN has been brought into 16 internal conflicts where it has no experience whatsoever.

DEEN: Yes. Don't you think that the religious and the ethnic violence are also caused by economic problems?

MULLER: To some extent definitely, but I don't think that in a region like Ireland, where the well-being is pretty high, that you have the clash between the Protestants and the Catholics being caused by economic reasons. So, in the poor countries I believe that this might be the case, but not necessarily. In my opinion, a world conference should look at every cause of violence, and the violence in the streets is definitely the poor miserable people who have no jobs, who have nothing to eat. When you are completely desperate, well, then you resort to violence. I think the human species should look at all the causes of violence and find ways of solving problems in non-violent ways. This is our approach in the University for Peace.

MORELLO: Since the University was founded in 1981, have you been able to measure any quantifiable progress, steps toward peace, other than, for example, the end of the cold war? We all speak of the end of the cold war as being a step toward peace, but where else can you find it?

MULLER: The University for Peace is not able to produce peace itself, but at least what we have been able to do is to convince the Central American republics to declare Central America a zone of peace and to begin to demilitarize it. So we have now the demilitarization of Panama by constitution. The heads of state of Central America are meeting every year, they send us their ministers of foreign affairs to ask us what are utopias, and we ask them, "Why don't you demilitarize?" Now Nicaragua has reduced its army by about 70 per cent, and the Salvadorians have come with their whole military academy to find out how they could live like the Costa Ricans without an army.

MORELLO: Do you see any prospect of any other countries living without an army, like Costa Rica has? Are there any other cases of that?

MULLER: Yes, you have 14 countries which are totally demilitarized. They are small countries -- Mauritius, St. Kitts, and so on. And others have a treaty with a big country to protect them, like Guam and others. And I'm even proposing that these countries should have a special group in the United Nations, a demilitarization group. And of course Oscar Arias, who got the Nobel prize, is preaching all over the world that we should begin to demilitarize.

LITTLEJOHNS: The former President of Costa Rica.

MULLER: The former President of Costa Rica.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Muller, you've spoken about the idea of a world commission on spirituality. What is that?

MULLER: Well, what we are seeing today is something fascinating. I have put together -- and that's my own UN profession as a coordinator -- I put together all the major events which are taking place at the end of the century. It is incredible. We have one world

conference after the other. We now have independent commissions like the Willy Brandt commission on economics from the north and south, Olof Palme on disarmament; --

LITTLEJOHNS: The Prime Minister of Norway.

MULLER: The Prime Minister of Norway. We have Mrs. Brundtland on the environment; we have Jacques Delors who heads the commission for education in the 21st century; we have the Prime Minister of Sweden heading a commission on how the world should be governed; we have now a new one under the President of Portugal on the seas and oceans. And when I looked at all this, I asked, but why doesn't anyone think of spirituality? Especially since it is mostly the religions which are fighting each other inside the wars, so that I believe that among the various world conferences and proposals which we are making now we should also have a world commission on spirituality to get the religions together.

LITTLEJOHNS: Have you received any encouragement from religious leaders for this idea?

MULLER: We're beginning to. And as a matter of fact, Harold Stassen, who is the last signer, the last man living who signed the Charter, has proposed that the United Nations should have a conference of religious leaders every year at the United Nations to teach them or to exhort them to make peace with each other. So the subject is in the air. Whether it will be done I do not know, but again, I am always trying, even without having the guarantee that I will succeed.

LITTLEJOHNS: You had a meeting with the Dalai Lama. What does he think about it?

MULLER: Well, he reacted in a very interesting fashion, and he will let me know after having studied the situation. So I gave him papers on my positions, and we will see what comes out of it. You have always to try.

LITTLEJOHNS: Perhaps the Chinese wouldn't be so happy, though, if he became a leader of such a movement.

MULLER: Well, sure, but you know, these commissions are totally independent. In other words, they are not created by the UN. The UN has all the world conferences, like the Women's Conference, the Social Summit, and so on. What is extraordinary is that never has humanity prepared itself for a new century and millennium as it is doing this time. And this is very, very good. We are going to have the Gorbachev Forum in San Francisco with 500 people giving an assessment of the world situation, and doing this year by year in order to enter the third millennium with a new vision of the future. This is wonderful. This has never been done before.

DEEN: You spoke of an international conference on violence. Have you any plans to propose this before the General Assembly as a new UN conference?

MULLER: Well, I'm an individual, but what I do is I get a head of state to propose it.

DEEN: Do you think they'll do it?

MULLER: Well, for example, we have a Week of Peace now, a world ceasefire, which was proposed by the Government of Costa Rica. I would also like to have a head of government propose that we prepare and celebrate the year 2000. We have four years left, and I think this is happening. I think the UN should celebrate the year 2000, or prepare for it, as we did for the 50th, and then every nation would create a commission to look into the future. The same way Roosevelt in the middle of the Second World War had a planning commission for afterward, we need to have a kind of thinking and planning commission for what we want to see happen in the third millennium.

DEEN: The Secretary-General released a new report for 1994, the annual report of the UN, and he said he was very disappointed that the post-cold war era did not deliver what it promised. There was no peace dividend, there were more regional conflicts, and the problems in the world seemed to be increasing rather than decreasing.

MULLER: Well, the funny thing -- and this is what Gorbachev also repeats all the time -- is that we had the end of the cold war and nobody sat down to find out what the dividends would be, everybody just remained without thinking. And as a result of this we have this trouble. If we had had a post-cold war commission at the UN to get the best thinkers to think about, well, what conclusions do we draw.... I'll give you one. We had a Military Staff Committee under the Security Council in Hunter College in 1946-47. The chiefs of armies met to prepare a world security plan and then to disarm. This was completely cut by the cold war. I am recommending now that the Military Staff Committee, the heads of the armies, should get together and begin to make a world security plan. And it is going to be discussed. As a matter of fact, there's a meeting of former generals and admirals which is going to meet in London in order to revive the Military Staff Committee of the Security Council. But we were a little bit lax in that we had not really thought out the end of the cold war. And I think that this meeting in San Francisco with Gorbachev is to try to find out what we can do now that the cold war is no longer an obstacle.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is **World Chronicle**. Our guest is Robert Muller, Chancellor of the University for Peace based in Costa Rica. Ted?

MORELLO: Speaking of the University itself as a body, ultimately what's going to -- other than the philosophical approach to it, what's ultimately going to contribute to its rise and fall is financial. Have you been getting any encouragement in the financial -- I think five years ago or so you had mentioned that there were only seven or eight countries which were actually contributing to this voluntary fund. Has it improved at all since then?

MULLER: Not much. We have only 32 countries out of 185 who have ratified the University, we have a little handful. You know, peace for many countries is something unheard of. The money goes to the military. And peace -- I don't know, there is some kind of a suspicion of peace. Of course, at that time when the University was created it was not very pleasant for the Americans, because at that time you had Nicaragua. So they thought that maybe this was a communist conspiracy to create a university while they were still involved in Nicaragua. Today it has disappeared, but still it is very difficult to get governments to organize peace. And they also do not accept the idea of world universities. You know, a world university is.... The American states had the same problem. When George Washington left [money] in his inheritance to create the first American university, to get the states together, the money disappeared, it was never created. So we are in a similar situation. They say, "We have our national universities, why do we need a world university in Central America?" But, like everything, you have to start.

LITTLEJOHNS: There's UN University, based in Tokyo. Is there any relationship between the two universities?

MULLER: The trouble with UN University in Tokyo is that that was the dream of U Thant, who was a teacher, and always said to me, "Robert, we are not going to have peace if we do not have a new education." The only trouble with the University in Tokyo is that they agreed to have no students. So what's the point of having a university when you have no students? You see, the military, they train young people. The American US Institute for Peace was supposed to be an academy of peace like West Point, but was also turned down by President Reagan, and now all they do is they produce papers. They're not allowed to have students. Now, at least we have students. We also have the World Maritime University of the International Maritime Organization, which has about 700 students; we have the university of the ILO, which has several hundred students; and we have the institute of the IAEA on nuclear physics. These are beginnings. As a matter of fact, I recommend that every agency in the United Nations should have a post graduate university on the grounds. I would like to have here at the UN a six-month to one-year course where all political science majors would come and would mix with the delegates and see. I would like the World Health Organization to have certain students in a world health university where they would come for a year after being a doctor to see what the world health problems are. For every -- the International Civil Aviation.... But those are dreams, you see. But you have to start somewhere.

MORELLO: But to go back to U Thant's recommendation or observation that you have to have different kinds of education, education doesn't start at the university level, yet all this talk has been about university level. What you're proposing for the very young, kindergarten is not too early to start peace.

MULLER: Well, I can tell you that I have drafted the World Core Curriculum, where the children would be taught that the earth is their home, humanity is their family, that they should see themselves in time and in place, and they should be trained mentally, physically, morally and spiritually.

MORELLO: This would be kindergarten for peace.

MULLER: And this is a kindergarten for peace. And as a matter of fact, the education even starts in the womb of the mother. It's called Early Beginnings, where the mother can already talk to the child, which is part of her flesh, which the medical doctors are now discovering. And when I proposed this about 25 years ago, people thought that I was crazy. But today I'm very happy that there are already 23 Robert Muller schools in the world who are teaching exactly that.

DEEN: You spoke about military spending. Have you got any indication that there has been a decline in military spending after the end of the cold war? I'm asking you this because there is a proposal that military spending should be linked to development assistance. Some countries say that development assistance should be given to third world countries only if they reduce their military spending. What do you think of this proposal?

MULLER: Well, that's an old proposal which I made already many years ago. I said that one should give more aid to those countries who do not spend money on the military. And it can be done. In Latin America, you have a regional security system under the Organization of American States, so that if any state is attacked by another state the Organization of American States will intervene. So you have total protection. So it can be done. Costa Rica is now demilitarized since '49. It was never attacked. At one point Somoza threatened to invade Costa Rica; one telephone call from the President to the President of the United States, one telephone call from the President to Somoza, "If you touch Costa Rica you'll get the inter-American air force on your neck," and he didn't move.

DEEN: In other words, you're saying you should have a collective security system. That's one way of cutting down military spending.

MULLER: That's one way, yes, exactly. And it can be regional, as is the case in Latin America. And also in Latin America you have no atomic weapons -- the Treaty of Tlatelolco. It was a UN official who entered the UN with me who finally got the Nobel prize for getting Latin America totally out of nuclear weapons. Can you imagine? So it can be done. Those are miracles which should be repeated elsewhere.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Muller, you expressed surprise that we haven't had world war three. Do you think that this is mainly because of the fact that we have a United Nations?

MULLER: No, I think it is mainly the fact that we have the atomic bomb. I think definitely this was the biggest restraint on both sides. If you read the little booklet by

Gorbachev for his session where he says, you know, "I felt so terrible, when I met President Bush, and we were sitting in a helicopter going to Camp David, and I had a guy next to me with a little black box for the atomic bomb, and he had another aide with a black box." How do you feel when you do this? And of course, that was so chronometered that they knew perfectly that any move on the other side could get an atomic....

DEEN: So what you're saying is that the atomic bomb has done more for world peace than the United Nations.

MULLER: Perhaps one could say so. It was probably the prevention of anyone getting into.... I must say to you that on the whole I see already some very good tendencies. Number one, you no longer have any ministries of war, they are all now called ministries of defence. Secondly, having worked with three secretaries-general, I have met many heads of state, and I have always a little sneaky question at a dinner or at a luncheon: "Do you think that you could become famous if you won a war?" And they look at me as if I were an idiot. And then I say, "Would you be happy if you could win the Nobel Prize for Peace?" and they smile. There is almost no head of state -- you have exceptions, like Qadhafi and an few others -- but on the whole, most of the heads of state want to get the Nobel Prize for Peace. You have now Mario Soares who got the Asturias Prize, which is millions of dollars --

LITTLEJOHNS: The President of Portugal.

MULLER: The President of Portugal. So that there are already.... Look at Europe. I come from a place where I could see the border from my window. Today the border has disappeared. If anyone had told me that I would see the border between France and Germany, which has created so much misery, disappear -- I was there in October, I could cross it! I was born in Belgium, I could go into Holland, into Germany -- not a single border left! So we have now a united Europe. And my passport says European Union, and under that it says French Republic. Now, if this can be done there, it can be done elsewhere. And as a matter of fact, at the same time that you have the [former] Yugoslavia, at the same time that you have the African problems, where they have not yet reached nationhood, which has helped us at least to create a United Nations when the tribes are still dominant, it is incredible that we have at this moment on this planet 20 regional communities in formation. Central America is becoming a Central American union. We have 20 of them. So at the same time that you have a disintegration in certain places, we have 20 unions being born on this planet. And nobody speaks about that.

MORELLO: The character of wars has changed, even within the time that the University has been in existence, from conventional wars, we can call it that, to, as you pointed out, national wars, intra-government wars. Does that mean that the approach to the solution for peace also has to follow that trend and change accordingly?

MULLER: Oh, definitely. I think that --

MORELLO: And in what way?

MULLER: Well, you see, again, I come back to when I say we need a science, a strategy and a methodology of peace. In other words, the strategy cannot exclude internal conflicts or conflicts of any sort. So that you have to look into how can you do this among religions. If I propose a world commission on spirituality, it is for the religions to begin to talk to each other. If Harold Stassen proposes that the UN every year should have the religious leaders, it is so that they can begin to talk to each other like the heads of states do. So we cannot leave this out of consideration. And this might take a little longer time, but you have to begin.

You know, I am amazed that when humans decide to do something, they can do it. When was the International Labour Organisation created? 1919, before the League of Nations. Why? Because labour violence was the greatest violence at the end of the last century, leading to communism, and at the beginning. Today labour violence is at the bottom. Why? Because they meet, they have agreements. And today if you have a labour conflict the worst you can do is to go on strike. So from the number one cause of violence, labour violence is almost not mentioned any more. We have done it in international affairs, too. You have only three conflicts which are between nations at the present moment, and they are all under control -- the Middle East, Kashmir, Cyprus. And the UN has done wonders! You have most of the conflicts now, out of 72 you have 69 which are internal conflicts. And the UN was never allowed to go into internal [conflicts]; now suddenly we find ourselves in 16 of them, without any experience. Can you see the Swedish soldiers in hilly Yugoslavia? They are dealing with mountain people! They are completely lost there! This is why for the first time they were captured as hostages.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Muller, 50 years after the event there's a good deal of revisionist thinking about the decision to use the atomic bomb against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Do you think that the United States was right to launch those attacks?

MULLER: I think one can have all kinds of opinions. I do not -- I very seldom --

LITTLEJOHNS: Because you've mentioned the importance of the atomic bomb in preventing the --

MULLER: As a factor, you see. But I'm always looking at the future and very seldom to the past. The past is the past. I think we have to close the door and look at the future. I'm totally in favour of the disappearance of all nuclear arms, and even nuclear energy. Why? Because it took billions of years for this planet to get rid of its original radiation, when we came out of the sun, and it was only at that time that life began to grow. And here today, we idiots, we let radioactivity reappear on this planet. And if we continue to do this we might put

an end to human life altogether. So therefore I think there ought to be a total suppression of anything that is nuclear on this planet, including nuclear energy. I have a proposal that atomic --

LITTLEJOHNS: You mean peaceful nuclear energy?

MULLER: Peaceful. Even that should be out. It should be out. We do not even need it. We have enough hydroelectric power in the world. The only reason why nations use nuclear power is because they do not want their neighbour to cut the source.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Muller, that's all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle**.

Our guest has been Robert Muller, Chancellor of the University for Peace. He was interviewed by Thalif Deen of Inter Press Service and Ted Morello of the Far Eastern Economic Review. I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

* * * * *

Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: **World Chronicle**, United Nations, Room S-827, New York, New York, 10017, USA.

World Chronicle is broadcast worldwide and features guests whose work is concerned with major global issues. This programme is a public affairs presentation of this station from United Nations Radio and Television.

Additional information material about the United Nations can be obtained by writing to the Public Inquiries Unit, United Nations, Room GA-57, New York, New York, 10017, USA, or the UN Information Centre in your country.